
The Exponent

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The Exponent, June 1991

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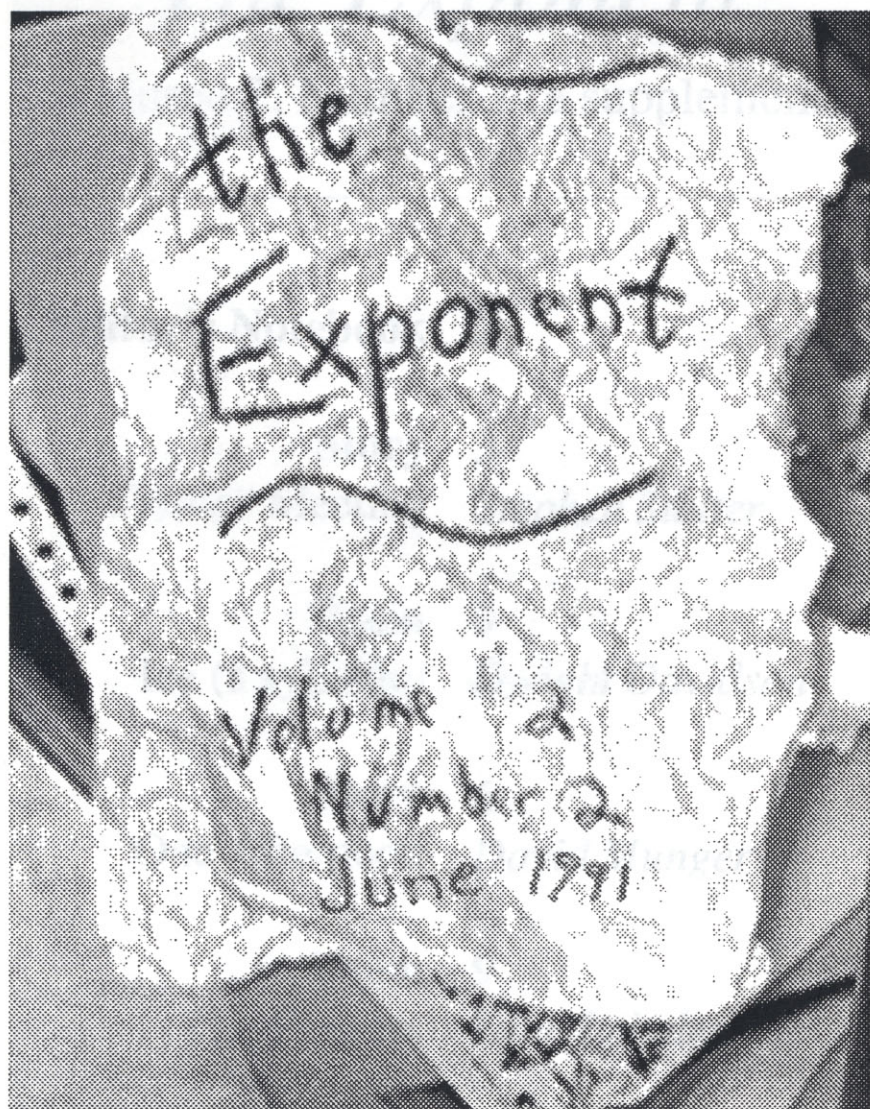


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The Exponent
Volume 2 Number 2 June 1991

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Volume 2, Number 2 (a supplement)

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Editor's Notebook

A few weeks ago I was having a conversation with my friend, David Hinnergardt (founder and former editor-in-chief of *The Exponent*). I asked if he needed any assistance with the publication. In true Socratic fashion, he answered my question with another question. "Would you like to have it?" he asked.

Now that David is graduating, holding down a full time job and getting married, he finds little time for extra responsibilities. He must, therefore, say a farewell to *The Exponent*. I have been asked to carry on the tradition he began in these pages, and I hope that I can produce an adequate publication worthy of what the founders and readers of *The Exponent* have come to expect.

Because of several busy

schedules I have had to put out this issue by myself. You may, therefore, find something of an editorial bias since only one pair of eyes (mine) has edited and selected the works appearing here. I must express my thanks, however, to *The Exponent's* staff and to David Hinnergardt for advice, information, and support.

This small issue is a supplement to *The Exponent*. It is a special focusing on fiction and poetry. The traditional format will return with the first issue of volume 3, which will appear next autumn when *The Exponent* will become a quarterly.

I hope that you will enjoy this supplement of creative writing and that it will enrich your enjoyment of *The Exponent*.
- David Munger

Looking for writing guidelines and submission information? See page 4.

Chance Meeting

A Tale of the Modern Jazz Age

I looked across the crowded room hoping to catch her eye, but was unsuccessful. She moved almost effortlessly, no awkwardness, just pure grace, as if she was royalty. The dress she wore, pleats folding in and out when she moved like a well-made accordion, was definitely expensive, but it did not scream for attention as so many of the nouveau-riche are accustomed to doing.

This was New York and I was only a sideman trying to make ends meet as a sax player for jazz gigs. I was hoping for a big break into a band somewhere in the big apple, but I guess that is what everyone was trying to do. As a result, our goal was drastically reduced to merely trying to pay our rent, keep our horns up, keep the stage clothes looking fresh, and keep the bar tabs down.

As a sideman, hoping to at least tour with a big name is a smaller goal. I've been on the

road with a few, but usually you end up as a regular at some club, backing up the local cats, running up your bar tab and changing your address so they don't catch up with you.

So why did I end up at this art expo in Soho? Because one of the cats I play with had a cousin who just might be making it big on the art scene. Otherwise, why would the dame be the main feature?

I avoided the champagne boys and headed to the bar for my customary gin martini. Safely in hand, I reached for my cigarette case, popped it open and slid a Lucky out into my nervously awaiting hand. Lighting it up with my Zippo, I cautiously moved toward the exhibit. That is when She caught my eye.

You have to understand that this was not the usual caliber of female that NYC produces, no cheap broad, fake blonde, or little spoiled rich girl looking for someone to

keep her check-book from bouncing since daddy cut her off. This girl was quality. Looking at her made me think of some new riffs on my sax. This was scary because I'm only a side-man, I'm no Charlie Parker.

I paused, trying to think of some intro that wouldn't sound like I wanted to score and that's all. I was hoping that my years of club life wouldn't ooze out on my tongue and I would be able to somehow preserve some air of class. I was stalling, and then she was gone, her flowing hair, her smile, the sparkle in her eyes; gone.

I didn't know where she went. I searched around frantically, trying to find her. Now

you have to understand that this was no small gallery and that this was no small crowd. I ran down the rickety wooden stairs, shaky as they were, and burst out of the doorway into the night air. There was no trace.

I looked around and ran up and down the street a few times, but she was nowhere. Anyone watching must have thought that I was being chased by the family or something (which was entirely possible), but this time that was not the case. You must understand that this was not normal, that it was very unusual. After a while, I ambled up the stairs again and headed for the bar. This time my drink was not for show.

- Stephen Stalter

The Exponent is an internally funded magazine dedicated to the publication of manuscripts from all disciplines. We encourage both fictitious and non-fictitious submissions. All non-fictitious papers should be targeted to an intelligent but not necessarily formed audience and should conform to either the Chicago Manual of Style or the MLA Style Manual. Avoid the use of sexist and gratuitous language. All submissions, except editorial letters, should be no longer than twelve, double-spaced, typed pages. Editorials should not exceed two, double-spaced, typed pages.

The Exponent encourages responses in support or contradiction to anything we publish. We encourage your remarks and suggestions concerning this publication.

Send all submissions to David Munger, P.O. Box 601, Cedarville, Ohio, 45314.

Ice (a syllabic)

why should I build bridges when
the world is made of ice?
when both sides of every
body meet together
in a systematic whole?
when the trip to meet an
other holds no threats of
falling--drowning in a
sea of pulling-under?
when a pounding raging
river's muffled--silenced
by a frigid tightening
crust of frozen scientific glass?

- *Dwight Davidson*

One Afternoon

When I came home Andy was playing a video game in the living room. There were cartridges lying all over the carpet and a glass of Coke standing a few feet from him. He stared at the flickering screen, his eyes jumping quickly from image to image. His small body was shaking with the jerking motions his fingers made. He fidgeted a lot, wanting so badly for the man in the game to escape, to get away from those hideous things that chased him.

"Andy, where's Mom?"

There was a delay while Andy wheedled out of a tough situation. "Don't know," he said, finally, still staring at the screen. "Daddy came home. He took her some-where."

"They just left you here? They wouldn't do that unless it was something serious, Andy. What happened?"

Another delay.

"Don't know." he said, through teeth clenched with the

concentration of battle.

I watched the game for a while, trying to figure out what had happened. Had there been a fight? Once, a long time ago, they had gotten in a fight and Dad had ordered her into the car. They drove off somewhere, were gone a long time, and came back silent.

Maybe Mom had gotten hurt and Dad was hurrying off to the hospital with her. I remembered some talk about her heart, some condition that was not normally dangerous, but could get serious at any time.

"Andy, did they say anything to you when they left?"

"Can't remember. I was playing."

"Oh." I was angry with him for not understanding, but I knew I shouldn't be. He was just a kid. It wasn't his fault that nobody in the family cared. That nobody cared about anything, really.

I didn't know what to do. Should I call friends of the

family? Should I call the police? Should I drive down to the hospital?

I got myself a Coke and sat at the kitchen table with it. I stroked the moisture off the side of the glass and thought some more. The best thing to do, I guessed, was to stay put. They knew I would wonder what had happened. They would try to contact me.

The phone rang. I jumped up to answer it.

"Hello?"

"Hi, Tom? Tom, it's Uncle Rick. Is your father there?"

"No, he's not. I don't know where he is. I just got home from school and Andy says they left a little while ago. I'm not sure what's going on."

There was a pause while Uncle Rick thought about that.

"Do you need some help, Tom? Is there anything I can do? Do you want me to come over?"

"I, uh . . . I don't know, I guess you don't need to come over. I could call you in a while if nothing happens. It seems like there's--"

There was a call-waiting tone.

"Can you hold on, Uncle Rick? I've got another call."

"Okay."

I clicked the receiver once.

"Hello?"

"Tom? Tom? It's Mother, Tom." She sounded hysterical. I'd never heard her sound so broken like that, like a scared little girl.

"I have something bad to tell you. It's very serious, and I need for you to be brave when you tell Andy. Tom, your father. . ."

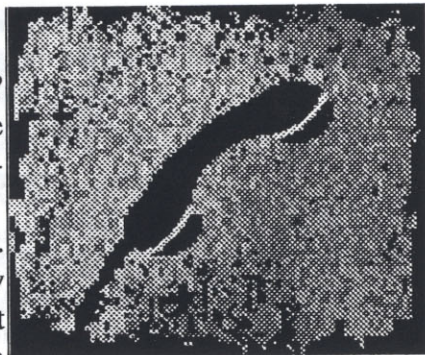
I felt a shock of pain in my head. I

felt a spasm of thought, like I was in the grip of something. There was a tremendous pressure in my head. I knew what she was going to say.

"He's dead!" I shouted, holding the receiver away from me. For a couple of seconds I couldn't bear to use the thing.

Then I took a breath and put it back against my ear. I could hear Mother making a confused, choking sound.

I went on. "He got hit by a



truck on the way home." I was still shouting. "He's lost too much blood."

I was crying now. I dropped the phone. I fell down, and then curled up on the floor, hugging myself. Andy came running in, his face a twist of questions.

I pulled him to me and held him tight. "Mother is a widow," I said. I don't know if he understood me, but he started to cry, too.

I picked the phone back up. Mother was saying, "Tom? Tommy? How. . . How did you know?"

I was very afraid now. "I don't know," I said softly, "I'm afraid."

She was quiet.

"Uncle Rick is on hold," I said.

"You. . . You'd better speak to him. I guess, you-- you'd better go. I don't know what to say, Tom. I'll be home soon." Then she hung up.

"Hello, Uncle Rick?"

"Yes?"

"Our father is . . . dead. I, uh . . ." I was struggling, "I need to go now."

"What? Tom, who told you?"

"I don't KNOW!" I screamed, and hung up.

Andy seemed to understand now. He cried in more desperate sobs, clutching at me. I stroked his head and rocked my body back and forth.

There was something that reached me. I knew something else, something no one else knew, something important and secret.

"The worst part of it is," I whispered to Andy, "our sister wasn't in time, our sister didn't make it. She'll never know him."

We sat like that on the kitchen floor for a long time and I wondered what would happen next. - David Munger

Writers: It's time to start thinking about submitting your essays, fiction, poetry, and editorials for the next Exponent. See page 4 for guidelines.

The Flowers

Faces pass
mumbling Hallmark words and phrases
floating by in an endless,
blurry single file line

Hands reach out
some old and wrinkly
admitting mutual questioning,
some hot and moist from a hurried pace,
some cold and clammy-
like death.

Myriads of flowers surround me
their scents taunting of the end of life.
Their brilliant, blazing colors
boldly defy their surroundings.

I turn my head slowly
to gaze into my husband's eyes
searching for those dancing eyes
that had always greeted me.

My eyes travel over the restful face settling on the mouth that may,
at any time,
purse into its funny quirk
ending this appalling joke.

My attention moves
to the brawny arms
anticipating any motion beckoning me into their warmth
making sense of my bewilderment.

I shudder
and then I am suffocated
by nervous friends and clucking family.
But the flowers scream,
'Alone!'

- Lynn Leindecker

Underfoot

Swishing and splashing
through water-cushioned grass,
two young rascals scamper,
stomp and roar--pretend monsters
of doom destroying
helpless humans underfoot--
while their father eyes
the re-gathering gloom and
hammers home the shutters
loosened by the
hurricane's last blast.

- *Jonathan Bird*

Poems that were to be published in the Porcelain Pig appear in this edition of The Exponent. The Pig's editor, Dwight Davidson, did not receive enough volume to constitute an issue of the Pig. We wish to express our thanks to Mr. Davidson for sharing these poems with The Exponent.